

115 bodies pulled out from Taiwan quake rubble; 2 missing

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Taipei: Rescuers have pulled out 115 dead a week since a powerful earthquake struck Taiwan's oldest city of Tainan, leaving only two missing in the rubble of a collapsed 17-story residential complex, authorities said today.

All but two of the dead were found at the ruins of the Weiguan Golden Dragon complex, which toppled when the 6.4-magnitude earthquake struck last Saturday just ahead of the Lunar New Year holiday. A total of 327 people in the building survived.

According to Taiwan's Interior Ministry, workers extracted scores more bodies yesterday and today morning. Two are still listed as missing.

Authorities have detained the building's developer Lin Ming-hui and two architects this week on suspicion of negligent homicide amid accusations his firm cut corners in the construction.

Tainan city officials said they will inspect several dozen other developments built by Lin, as well as other buildings in the Weiguan compound that did not collapse.

Earthquakes frequently strike Taiwan, but usually cause little or no damage, particularly since more stringent building regulations were introduced following a magnitude-7.6 quake in 1999 that killed more than 2,300.

- AP